

# **Patagonia Sur Carbon Offset Project**

## **FAQs**

### **What is Patagonia Sur?**

Patagonia Sur is a for-profit conservation company that invests in, protects, and monetizes ecologically valuable ecosystems in Chilean Patagonia. In addition to permanently protecting more than 60,000 acres in Patagonia with conservation easements, Patagonia Sur started a native-species reforestation effort, under the [Verified Carbon Standard \(VCS\)](#) protocol, which generates carbon offsets that the company sells to universities and corporations wanting to offset their carbon footprint. Patagonia Sur has also launched several non-profit entities including [Tierra Austral](#), Chile's first land trust; [MERI](#), a blue whale research institute; and [Reforestemos Patagonia](#), a highly successful public-private campaign to reforest Torres del Paine and other national parks in Chile.

### **What is Colgate's involvement with Patagonia Sur?**

Colgate invests in a native reforestation project through Patagonia Sur to offset (sequester) about 5,000 tons of carbon per year. Colgate's investment in this project helps to counterbalance the university's emissions associated with air travel and employee commuting. As of 2018, Colgate has been responsible for planting more than 60,000 trees in the Valle California Nature Reserve. In addition, alumni traveling to reunion have been offered the option to offset their carbon emissions through this reforestation project in Patagonia Chile.

### **Why Chile?**

When Colgate was putting together its 2011 Sustainability and Climate Action Plan for carbon neutrality by 2019, the Sustainability Council learned that developing a new offset program at that time was exceedingly expensive, laborious, and would require managerial oversight. Furthermore, students in Environmental Studies concluded after semester-long research that developing a local project that would offset more than 5,000 tons per year, would require more than \$1 million per year to make feasible. Additionally, there were no local sequestration options that adhered to rigorous third-party certification from the most respected offset certification programs, Verified Carbon Standard and Gold Standard.

Throughout 2011, at the request of Colgate's senior administration, the offsets working group of the Sustainability Council considered Patagonia Sur's approach to carbon offsets and ecological restoration. Beyond simply sequestering carbon, Patagonia Sur created jobs, focused on ecosystem restoration using native species, and presented educational opportunities that were more in-depth than domestic options. In addition, Patagonia Sur's option made more fiscal and environmental sense when compared to other high-quality carbon offset projects.

### **Does Colgate own any land in Chile?**

No. Colgate invests in a tree planting project to sequester carbon and regenerate ecologically devastated forested lands, but the university does not own any land in Chile or anywhere else outside of New York State.

**Besides mitigating our campus carbon footprint, does the Patagonia reforestation project contribute to Colgate's academic mission?**

Yes. The Patagonia reforestation project has also created academic and research opportunities for students and faculty within the Valle California Nature Reserve. Since 2012, we've had several Colgate faculty members and students visit the site and conduct research. In January 2018, 12 students traveled to Patagonia as part of a 3-week extended study program. The trip was led by biology professor, Eddie Watkins, and sustainability director, John Pumilio. The trip was a success and the students were able to conduct research, explore new cultures, challenge themselves, and grow intellectually and personally.

**Were native Chileans displaced through this project?**

No. The land was mostly unsettled and not suitable for farming or other commercial uses. Five property owners voluntarily sold their land to Patagonia Sur. Two of those owners continue to live onsite and now have good steady employment working for Patagonia Sur.

Prior to this project, Chile also did not have options for conservation easements. One of the side projects of Patagonia Sur, was creating an avenue, in conjunction with the Chilean government, where people can place their private property into permanent conservation, much like the forever wild preservations of New York State.

**Will the Patagonia Sur carbon offset project lead Colgate to carbon neutrality?**

No. The Patagonia Sur project offsets approximately one-third of Colgate's total carbon footprint. In the months and years ahead, members of the Sustainability Council will continue to engage the Colgate community to explore additional offset options with a special interest in local or regional projects.